

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 174783
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 /019 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:JRMALOTT:EI

APPROVED BY NEA/INS:PWLANDE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY

UNCLAS STATE 174783

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJECT: HAPPY BUDDHA STEAK HOUSE

REF: A) COLOMBO 3074; B) COLOMBO 3110; C) COLOMBO 3140;
D) COLOMBO 3170; E) STATE 173160

1. NEA/INS DESK OFFICER SPOKE TO AMERICAN OWNER OF HAPPY BUDDHA STEAK HOUSE, WHO SAID THAT NAME "HAPPY BUDDHA" IS OFFICIALLY REGISTERED WITH STATE OF TEXAS AND HAS BEEN USED FOR LAST SEVEN YEARS. SHE SAID THAT DURING THIS TIME SHE HAS RECEIVED NO COMPLAINTS, THAT NAME HAS BECOME WELL KNOWN, AND THAT HER LAWYER HAS HAD TO INSTITUTE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST CHINESE RESTAURANT IN GALVESTON USING SAME NAME.

2. DEPTOFF EXPLAINED THAT RESTAURANT NAME AND ADVERTISE-
MENT HAD CAUSED PROBLEM IN SRI LANKA, WHICH TAKES ITS
BUDDHISM SERIOUSLY. AFTER ASKING WHERE SRI LANKA IS, SHE
SAID, "IF THEY GOT UPSET ABOUT MY AD IN THE HOUSTON
CHRONICLE, I WONDER WHAT THEY WOULD SAY ABOUT THE EIGHT FOOT
TALL STATUE OF THE HAPPY BUDDHA I HAVE OUT FRONT?"

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3. IF MINISTER HURULLE RAISES SUBJECT WITH AMBASSADOR ON
JULY 14, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES FOLLOWING POINTS SHOULD BE MADE:
EMBASSY HAS ALREADY PASSED CONCERNS BACK TO DEPARTMENT;

DEPT OFFICER SPOKE TO RESTAURANT OWNER, WHO EXPRESSED
SURPRISE THAT RESTAURANT NAME HAD CAUSED PROBLEMS, AS SHE
HAS RECEIVED NO COMPLAINTS IN PREVIOUS SEVEN YEARS;

NAME HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REGISTERED WITH AND ACCEPTED BY
STATE OF TEXAS FOR SEVEN YEARS; NAME IS
WELL-KNOWN TO PUBLIC AND IT THEREFORE IS UNLIKELY THAT
OWNER WOULD VOLUNTARILY CHANGE NAME; AND JURISDICTION
OVER THIS MATTER FALLS WITH STATE OF TEXAS AND NOT WITH
U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

4. LOCAL SRI LANKA EMBASSY SAYS IT HAS RECEIVED NO INSTRUCTIONS FROM COLOMBO ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. IT HAS DEALT WITH SIMILAR PROBLEMS IN THE PAST, ALWAYS UNSUCCESSFULLY. ITS APPROACH HAS BEEN TO WORK THROUGH LOCAL CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH IN TURN EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL BODIES WHICH HOLD JURISDICTION. EMBASSY SAYS IT PLANS TO FOLLOW SAME APPROACH IN THIS CASE, WHILE IN OUR ESTIMATE THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THIS APPROACH WOULD SUCCEED IN CASE OF HAPPY BUDDHA STEAK HOUSE, WE BELIEVE IT IS THE ONLY COURSE WHICH CAN BE PURSUED.

5. BECAUSE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HOLDS NO JURISDICTION IN THIS MATTER, WE BELIEVE THAT LOCAL SRI LANKA EMBASSY SHOULD HANDLE PROBLEM AND THAT NO FURTHER ACTIONS OR STATEMENTS ON OUR PART ARE REQUIRED. CHRISTOPHER

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